

# NEW SPANISH DESIGN

GUY JULIER

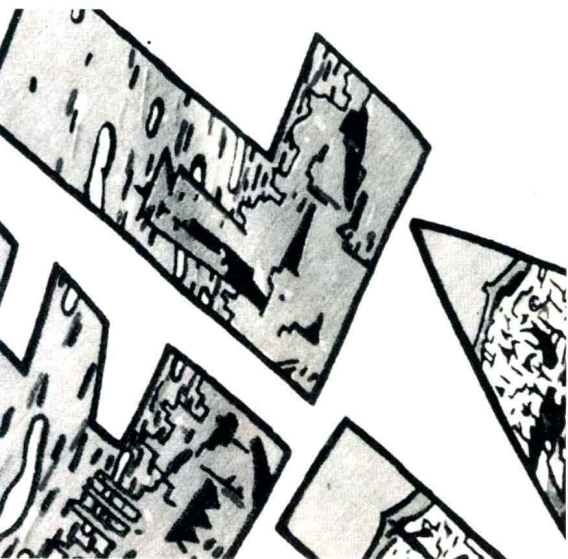




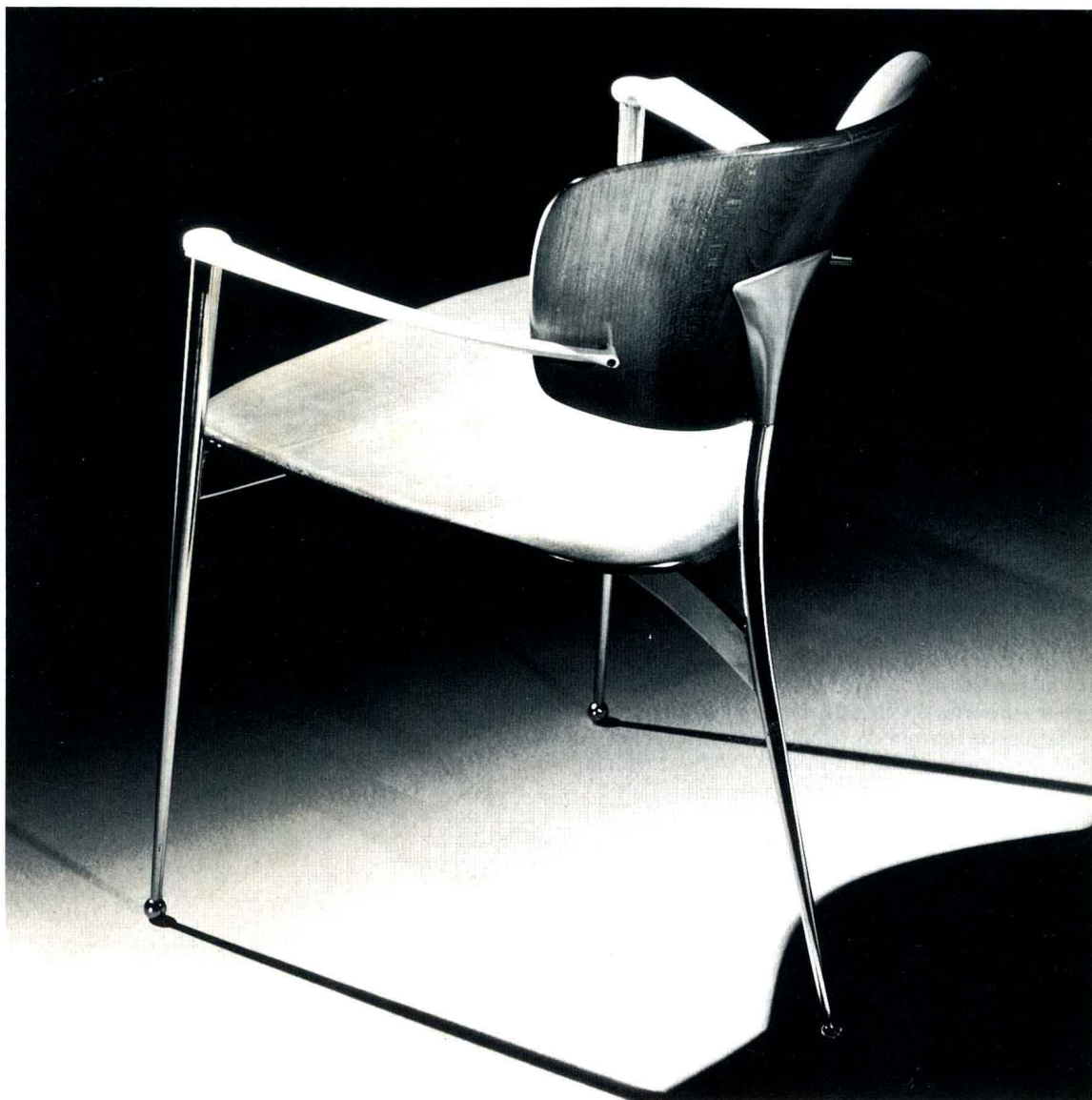
# new spanish design



guy julier



with 218 illustrations, 152 in colour



thames and hudson

*For Sue and Joseph*

**Author’s note**

In Spain the surnames of both father and mother are sometimes used (*hence* Oriol Bohigas y Guardiola). In this book, however, the more common shorter version of paternal surname only is used throughout (*hence* Oriol Bohigas). Where it has been necessary to choose between Catalan and Castilian spellings of names, the author has tried as far as possible to be consistent with the most common usage in Spain itself.

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# contents

## introduction

7

1

## design in history

From Art and the State to the State of the Art

17

2

## furniture

The Unification of Culture and Commerce

41

3

## graphics

Images and Identities

89

4

## interiors and public spaces

New Modernism and Modernist Baroque

121

5

## products

Tools for Industrial Reconversion

161

Chronology

177

Biographies: Designers, Companies, Studios

179

Design on Show: Galleries, Museums, Shops

184

Guide to Sources: Books, Catalogues, Articles

185

Acknowledgments

187

Index

188

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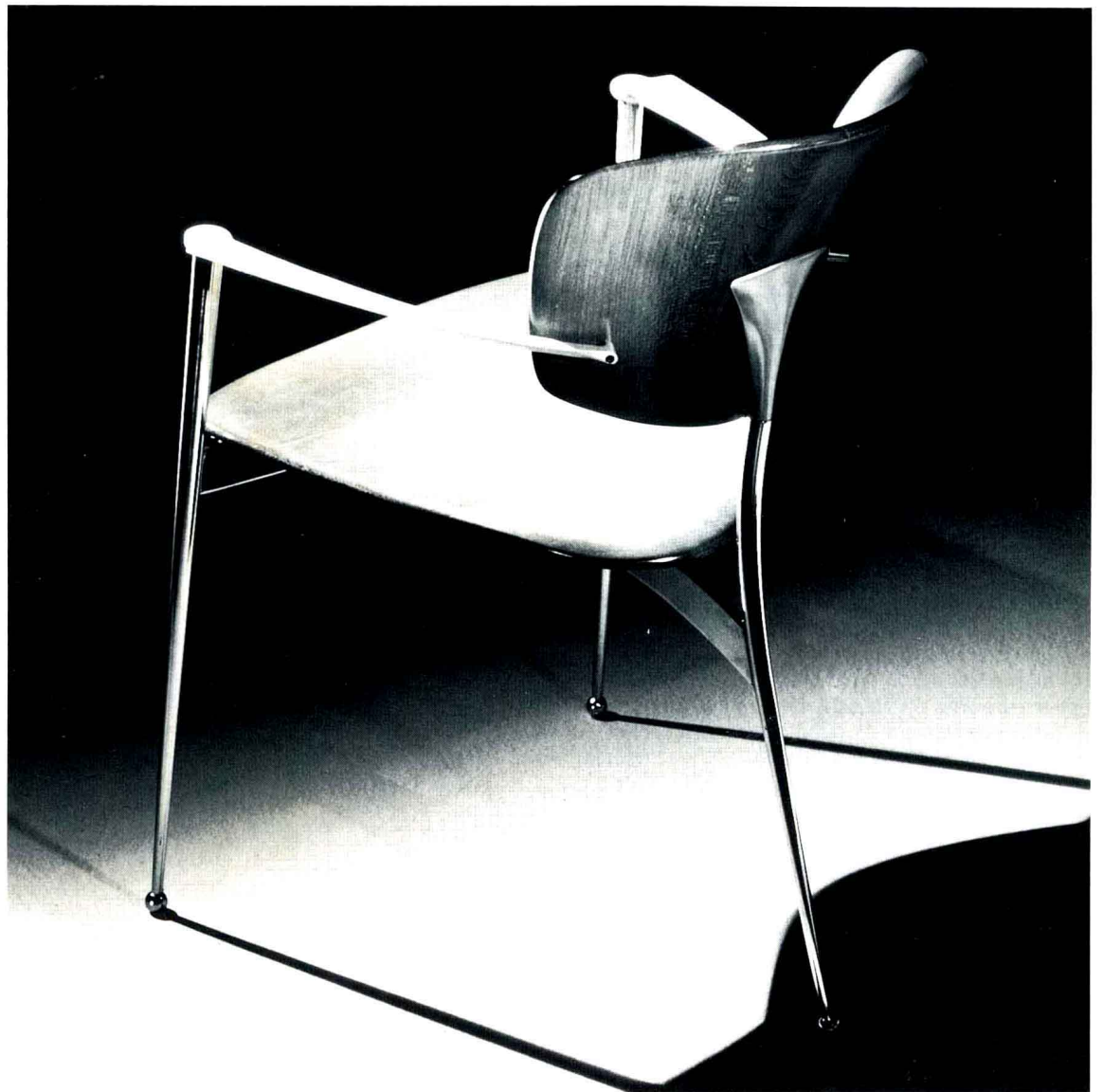
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184

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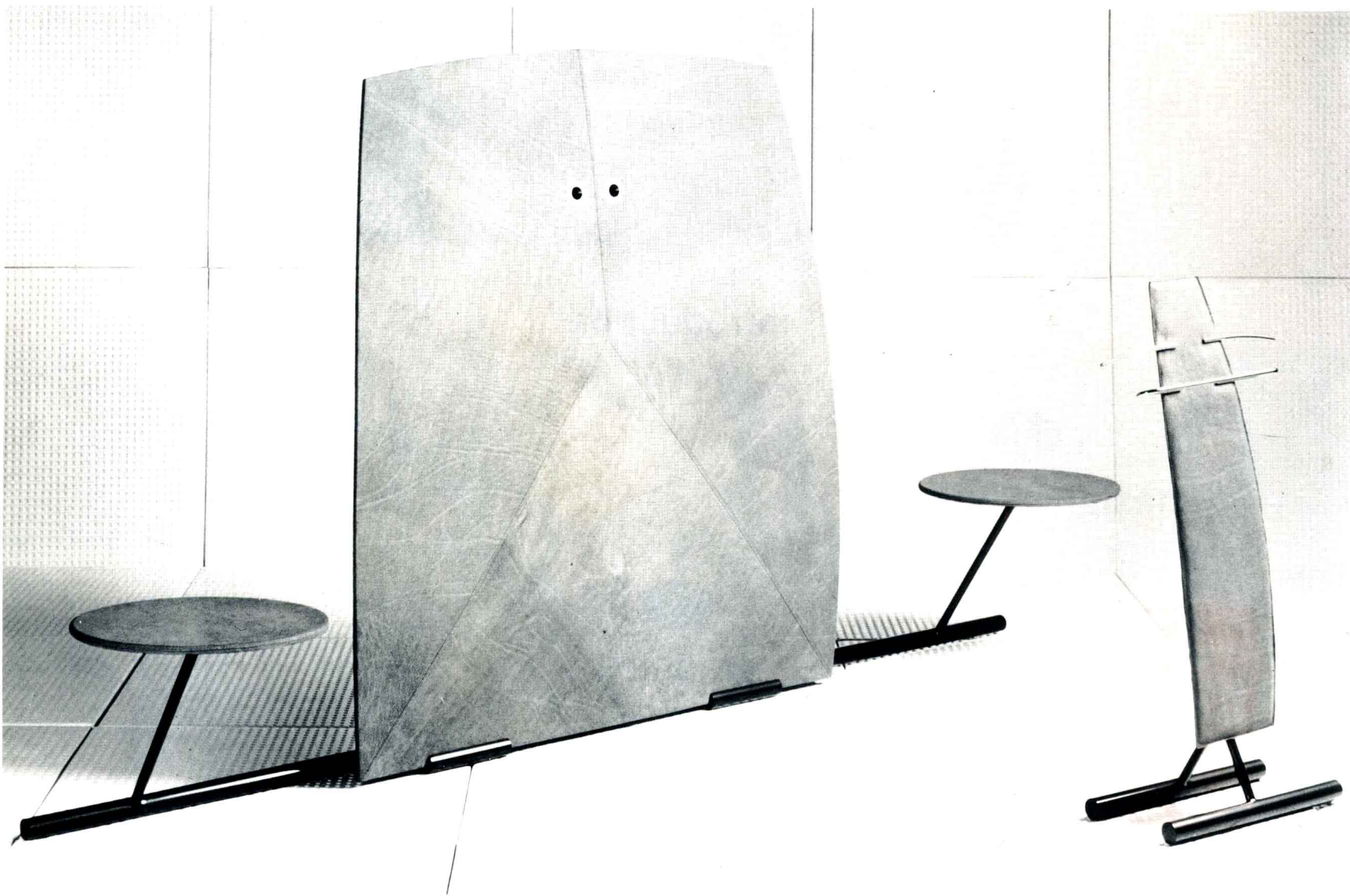
185

Acknowledgments

187

Index

188



Headboard and clothes rack  
Eduardo Samsó  
Akaba S.A.  
1986

# introduction

**f**OLLOWING THE DEATH OF GENERAL

Franco in 1975 and the subsequent transition from dictatorship to democracy, there is no doubt that Spain underwent a design boom in the 1980s. It received international acknowledgment through the growing prominence of the Spanish stands at the Milan Furniture Fair, and was also seen in the increasing numbers of buyers who found their way to the annual Valencia furniture fair. At the same time the Barcelona *bares de diseño* circuit became a unique phenomenon in contemporary design and the corporate identities of city and regional councils were radically transformed.

This design boom came on the crest of a wave of post-Francoist social, economic and cultural changes. After 1980, Spain joined NATO and the EEC, and became the seat for the Olympic Games in Barcelona, the World Fair in Seville and European Cultural Capital in Madrid, all for 1992. In 1985 the Spanish economy took a marked upturn. With these events came new patterns of consumption, new industries and a new national image.

The image of, literally, re-designing a country following thirty years of dictatorship captured the popular imagination outside Spain. The interpretation of this efflorescence, however, has led to unhelpful generalizations. Perhaps in search of the essence of a Spanish identity in design, commentators adopted approaches that were specific and a-historical, which meant that they ended up with *typical Spanish*. Spain is a nation of distinct regions. Undoubtedly the greatest concentration of designers and design activity rests in Barcelona – a fact which this book unapologetically recognizes – but in the 1990s it is becoming an increasingly regionalized affair as activity is consolidated elsewhere.

Spain's pioneering designers began working in the 1950s, before the rapid technological and industrial development of the 1960s. Another generation, who are now in their forties, were educated within radical resistance to Francoism in the late 1960s. The youngest designers have not worked under any period



of dictatorship or experienced the economic depression of the 1970s, and yet are more susceptible to the myriad of influences that democratic Spain has thrown up.

This book, then, does not intend to treat Spanish design as a homogeneous entity. There is no search for the definitive Spanish style. Rather, whilst recognizing the eclecticism of Spanish design, it attempts to identify certain unifying elements within its historical development. These include the changing status and meaning of design, the influence of design education, the political solutions that design presented and the industrial structures in which it acts. Throughout, the text also recognizes the balances and tensions between the cultural and commercial interests of design.

Additionally, there can be no denying that modern Spanish design is highly subject to international influences at both ends of its history. These influences are themselves constantly subject to inflexions produced by the Spanish contexts. And it is such inflexions that give the design its significance and suggest the interest it contains. The questions at stake are: what influences are chosen, why and how are they used?

In view of the mixture of indigenous contexts and internationalist influences, the timing of the Spanish design boom is crucial. Coming after the Postmodern euphoria of Alchymia and Memphis, it was in a position to reconsider inflexions which open out new directions in design.

There is a third dimension to the influences on design in Spain, which is perhaps the hardest to gauge – the surrounding material scenery. The legacy of Gaudí, Miró and Dalí is at times plain to see. But the everyday street life of Spain is also saturated with images. Whilst its growing internationalization has brought a bombardment of foreign references to the visual vocabulary of Spain, at the same time there remain domestic details which are untouched.

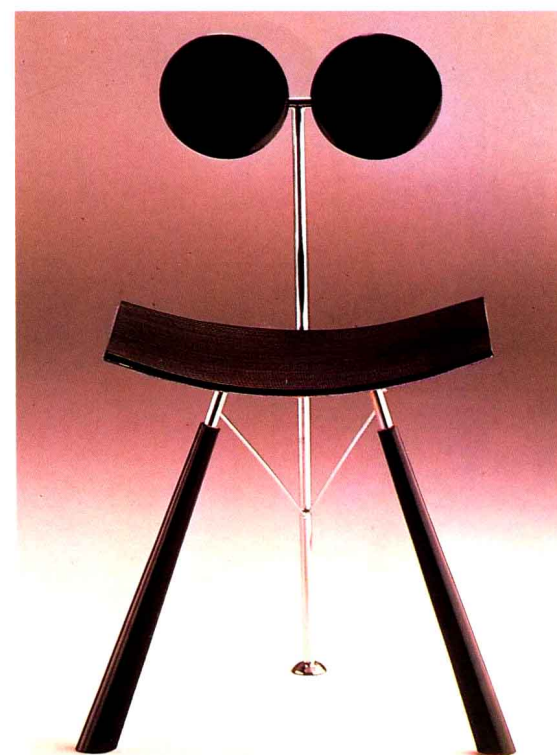
*New Spanish Design* responds to these contexts – but it also adds to them. All the examples in this book have been produced or used. They are real. And here we find the fundamental importance of Spanish design. The concept of a design boom might suggest that we are dealing only with a fashion, but the fact remains that Spanish design is not just a series of manifestos and exhibitions: it is concerned with the actual generation and development of a fresh material culture, which has important resonances both inside and outside Spain.



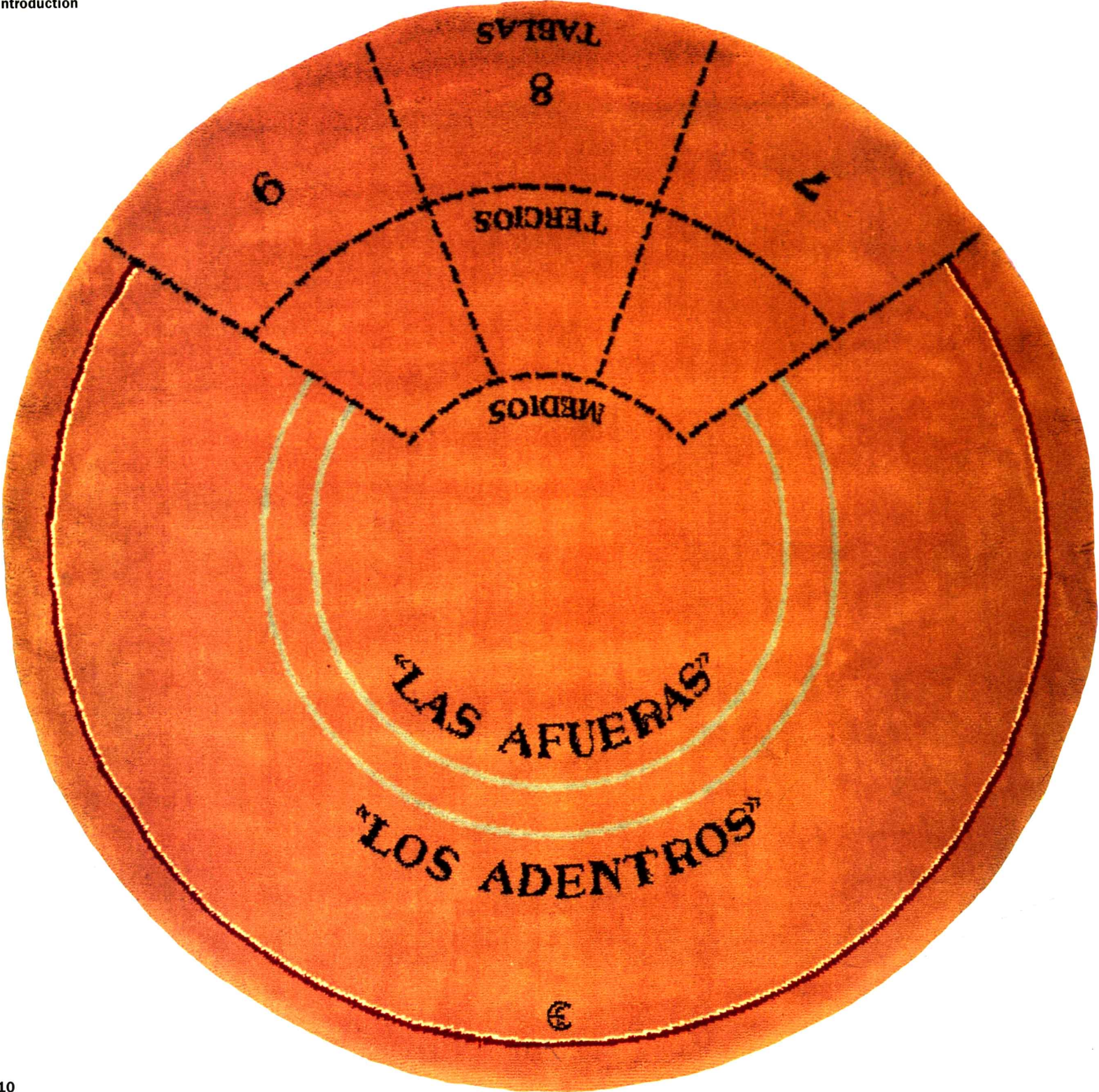
Left: Coqueta chair  
Stainless steel frame, leather belt, Lloyd loom seat  
Pete Sans  
B.D. Ediciones de Diseño  
1988

Below: Mosca (fly) chair  
Chrome steel, with wooden seat and backrest,  
rubber upholstered  
J.J. Belda  
Exhibited by Luis Adelantado  
1987

The design boom of the 1980s saw movements in two directions: one was towards the recuperation of traditional craft skills and the other was towards forging new formal foundations.





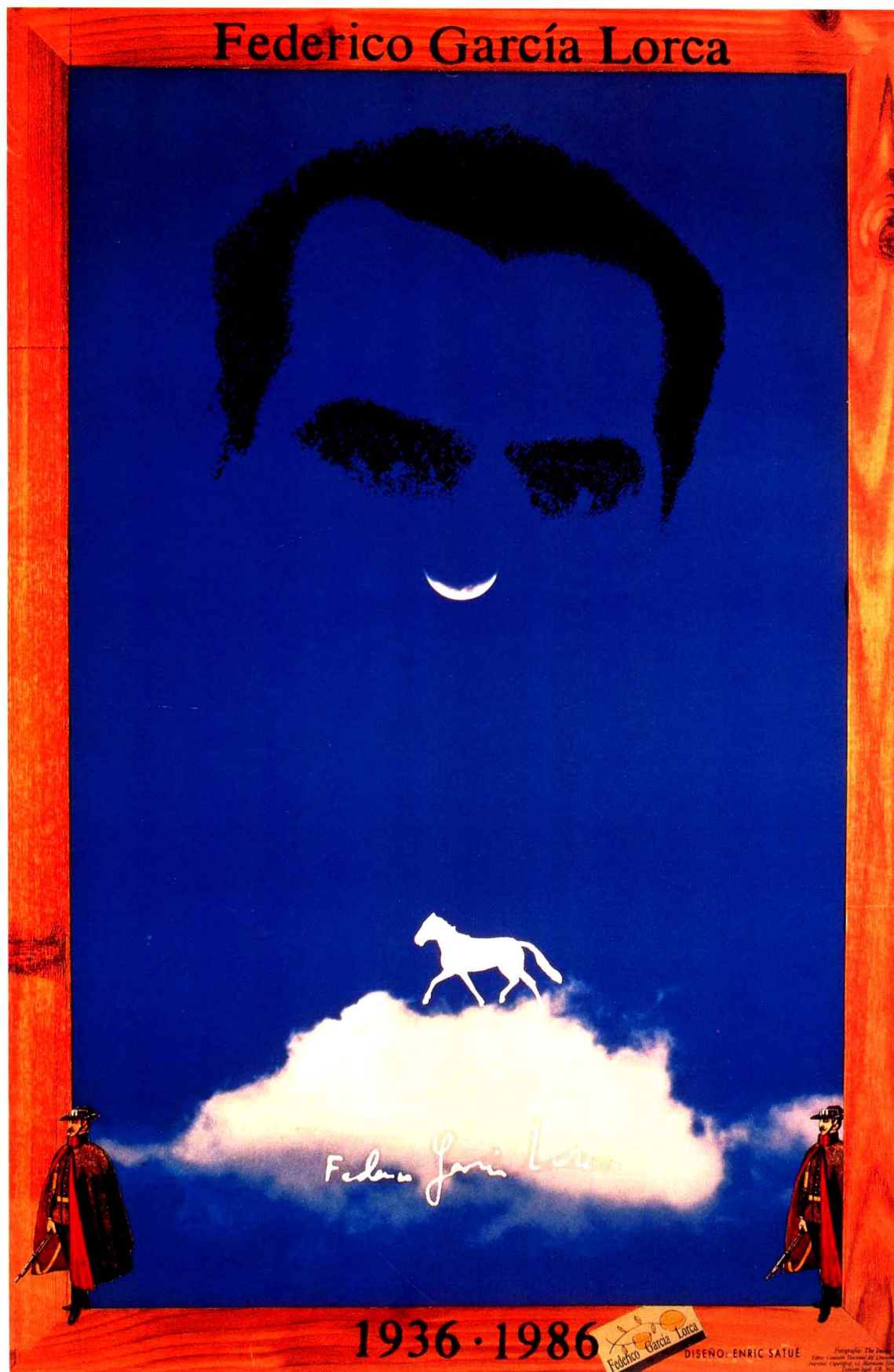




Left: A las 5 de la tarde  
(At 5 p.m.) rug  
Eduardo Samsó  
Nani Marquina S.A.  
1987

Right: Poster for  
commemoration of  
García Lorca  
Enric Satué  
1986

Among younger  
designers such as  
Eduardo Samsó, there is  
sometimes an explicit –  
if ironically playful –  
statement of 'typical  
Spanish'. The rug  
illustrates the layout of  
a bullring. Among  
others, of an older  
generation – such as  
Enric Satué in particular  
– there is a play on  
visual languages  
through the suggestion  
and juxtaposition of  
images and ideas. In  
either case, strong  
emphasis is laid on the  
communicative element  
of the design.







Above: Banco Catalano bench

Oscar Tusquets

B.D. Ediciones de Diseño

1974

Production of this bench was increased dramatically in the 1980s when it began to be a standard feature of renovated public spaces.

Right: Inflatable fried eggs

Marisa Gallén and Sandra Figuerola, La Nave  
Torrente Industrial (TOI) S.A.

1987

Having persuaded the manufacturers of the commercial viability of this project, Gallén and Figuerola developed a line in 'pop' inflatables that has proved an adventurous industrial reconversion for them. The diameter of the eggs is 150 cms.



